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1792.

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CIRCULAR

To the Honorable Members of the
Common Council of the City of London

To the Lord Mayor

And to the Corporation of the City of London

PRINTED BY J. B. LITTLE
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JUDGE ASHHURST'S

CHARGE,

To the GRAND JURY of MIDDLESEX,

November 20, 1792.

"Gentlemen of the Grand Jury,

I Have the honour to meet you upon the stated return of this solemnity, for putting in execution the Criminal Law, and bringing such offenders to justice, as by their crimes have subjected themselves to the punishments which the law ordains. Gentlemen, there is no nation in the world that can boast of a more perfect system of government than that under which we have the happiness to live; where no man is so high as to be above the reach of the law, and no man so low as not to be within its protection; where the power of the crown on the one hand, and the liberty of the subject on the other, are both effectually secured, and at the same time kept within their proper limits.

The law of this country only lays such restraints on the actions of individuals, as are necessary for the safety and good order of the community at large; and such restraints are so far from being infringements on civil liberty, that civil liberty could not subsist without them; for if every man was left to the free and uncontrouled exercise of his own will, as in a state of nature, no man could be secure in his person or property, and the weak would be a prey to the stronger hand; but in a state of civil government, each individual grows strong in the strength of the community.

Gentlemen, it is civil liberty that is the parent of industry, and consequently of wealth: for in a state of nature, as there was no security to property, no man thought of appropriation further than for the momentary supplies of his own immediate necessities. But when men have formed themselves into a state of civil society, the consciousness which every man feels that his property is secure, induces the habits of industry. He does not bound his pursuits to the mere supply of his present wants, but looks forward to future ages. Mutual wants put men upon finding out the means of mutual supply: this gives rise to trade and commerce, and extends men's connexions beyond the narrow circles of their own immediate families and friends; and thus from mutual wants spring mutual happiness.

But, Gentlemen, as a preliminary step to procuring these enjoyments, it was necessary that mankind, on entering into the state of society, should give up into the hands of the governing power of the state, that species of liberty which resulted from a perfect equality in all men, and where no man had a right to impose upon another a rule of conduct, but each man, as far as his strength would carry him through, followed the dictates of his own will. A state of society cannot subsist without subordination; there must be general rules laid down by the governing power of the state (where ever it resides) as the standard by which men's actions are to be measured and regulated, so as to prevent them from being injurious to the rights and happiness of their fellow citizens; and there must be a coercive power, residing in such hands as the constitution has thought fit to place it, to enforce such laws and rules of action as the wisdom of the state has thought fit to prescribe.

Happily for us, we are not bound by any laws, but such as are ordained by the virtual consent of the whole
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kingdom, and which every man has the means of knowing. If men judged rightly, they would be persuaded that their happiness as well as their security depends on a due observance and support of the laws. There will, however, even in the best formed systems of government, always be found men of selfish and corrupt principles, who forsake the paths of honest industry, and prefer the shorter road of supplying their wants and extravagancies by rapine and spoil. When that is the case, it becomes necessary for the coercive power of the state to lend its restraining hand, and to punish the offender, and if the offence is of so flagrant a nature, that there is no hope of the reformation of the offender, there it is necessary the corrupted member should be cut off, to prevent others from being contaminated by his example.

But, though crimes must not go unpunished, we may venture to boast, that in the administration of the criminal law, no nation has ever been so careful of the lives and liberties of the subjects, or has made such humane provisions to ensure the most careful investigation of the imputed crime, as that in which we live.—The ordaining a preliminary inquest of inquiry, by means of a Grand Jury, composed of men of the first rank and figure in the county, is a guard and caution unknown to any other country; and when they have so far given their sanction to the proceeding, as to pronounce it a matter fit for further inquiry, the privilege which the party accused enjoys, of having the matter tried before a jury of his equals, with liberty to except to any of them that he may think likely to be prejudiced against him, is the most valuable birth-right of an Englishman. The law is no less careful in protecting men's civil rights and properties; and I hope I may add, that there is no nation where the law is more uprightly and impartially administered than in ours.

For these blessings, we are indebted to the wise and prudent

prudent form of our constitution: and that security which naturally results from well-regulated laws, has been a spur to industry, and has occasioned our commerce to be extended beyond the example of former ages: and whoever will take the trouble of making the enquiry, will find, that in every Manufacturing County in the kingdom, the demand for their manufactures is greater than they are able to supply.

Such is the flourishing state of the kingdom, and such the happy fruits of liberty and peace.

One should suppose there was not a man in the kingdom who did not feel this, and who did not feel it with a grateful heart; and yet there are men of dark and gloomy hearts—men who have neither fortune nor character to lose—who would wish to overturn the venerable fabric of our Constitution, which has been the work and pride of ages; which has been revered at home, and been the envy of surrounding nations—and to give us in return, a state of universal anarchy and confusion. There have been publications in which the author disclaims all ideas of subordination, as contrary to the natural rights and equality of mankind, and recommends the example of a neighbouring nation, as a model for our imitation. Alas! humanity is called upon to pity the deplorable situation of that country; but it is a very ill-chosen example to hold forth to a nation in the most flourishing state of happiness; and it is a pretty extraordinary request that we would with our eyes open plunge ourselves into the same abyss of misery.

One might naturally have expected, that doctrines so monstrous and nonsensical would have been treated with the contempt they deserve, and would have sunk into oblivion. But when tenets so wild and extravagant are taken up by formed societies of men, who meet for the express purpose of disseminating such doctrines; that

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they hold correspondence with other similar societies at home as well as in a neighbouring nation, it is time for every sober-minded man, and every well-wisher to the safety and prosperity of the country, as much as in him lies, to endeavour to crush such unconstitutional and pernicious doctrines.

Gentlemen, His Majesty, (who is always anxious for, and watchful over the safety and prosperity of his country) did some time ago issue his Royal Proclamation, which well deserves the attention of every good subject; and I fear the circumstances which gave rise to that proclamation are yet not so totally at an end, as to make it unseasonable for me to recal it to your recollection.— Gentlemen, His Majesty in that proclamation, states; that, &c. (*Here the Judge recited the principal heads of the Proclamation.*)

Gentlemen, I cannot help expressing the happiness I feel, that His Majesty's proclamation has been received by his subjects with all due marks of respect and attention, and there are scarce any parts of the kingdom, that have not, in their addresses to His Majesty, expressed their hatred and abhorrence of such pernicious doctrines, and shewn that they are not to be duped out of their happiness by the shallow artifices of such men, who, having nothing to lose, would wish to enrich themselves by the destruction of all government, and the substituting anarchy and confusion in the place of it.

Gentlemen, the officers of the crown have taken all due pains to bring such offenders to justice as have come to their knowledge, and I have no doubt but such offenders will meet with due punishments for their crimes.— But as the evil has not yet ceased, and these sowers of sedition are still abroad, we ought not to content ourselves with merely wishing well to the prosperity of the kingdom, but every honest man and well-wisher to his country

country ought to stand forth, and shew as much zeal and activity in supporting the cause of order and good government, as these wicked emissaries do in endeavouring to subvert it.

Gentlemen, I trust I am addressing myself to a Grand Jury composed of men who have sense and understanding enough to know how to set a due value on the blessings they enjoy; and therefore I earnestly recommend it to such of you as are in a private station, to endeavour, by your example, to discountenance all such unconstitutional tenets; and to such of you as are invested with the office of magistracy, that you would endeavour to bring all such offenders to justice, who openly avow, and by printed publications endeavour to justify, such seditious and unconstitutional doctrines as I have above alluded to, and are noticed in His Majesty's proclamation.

Gentlemen, I shall not take up any more of your time, but recommend it to you, with all due dispatch to proceed on the public service you are engaged in; and I doubt not but that you will discharge your duty in a manner honourable to yourselves, and such as will merit the thanks of your country.

BY THE KING.
A PROCLAMATION.

GEORGE R.

WHEREAS divers wicked and seditious writings have been printed, published, and industriously dispersed, tending to excite tumult and disorder by endeavouring to raise groundless jealousies and discontents in the Minds of our faithful and loving subjects, respecting

ing the Laws, and happy Constitution of Government, Civil and Religious, established in this kingdom, and endeavouring to vilify and bring into contempt the wise and wholesome provisions made at the time of the glorious Revolution, and since strengthened and confirmed by subsequent Laws, for the preservation and security of the Rights and Liberties of our faithful and loving subjects: and whereas divers writings have also been printed, published, and industriously dispersed, recommending the said wicked and seditious Publications to the attention of all our faithful and loving subjects: and whereas we have also reason to believe that correspondences have been entered into with sundry persons in Foreign Parts, with a view to forward the criminal and wicked purposes above mentioned: And whereas the Wealth, Happiness, and Prosperity of the Kingdom do, under Divine Providence, chiefly depend upon a due submission to the Laws, a just confidence in the integrity and wisdom of Parliament, and a continuance of that zealous attachment to the Government and Constitution of the Kingdom, which has ever prevailed in the minds of the people thereof: And whereas there is nothing which we so earnestly desire as to secure the Public Peace and Prosperity, and to preserve to all our loving Subjects the full enjoyment of their Rights and Liberties, both religious and civil: We, therefore being resolved, as far as in us lies, to repress the wicked and seditious practices aforesaid, and to deter all persons from following so pernicious an example, have thought fit by the advice of our Privy Council, to issue this our Royal Proclamation, solemnly warning all our loving subjects, as they tender their own happiness, and that of their posterity, to guard against all such attempts which aim at the subversion of all regular Government within this Kingdom, and which are inconsistent with the peace and order of Society; and earnestly
 exhort-

exhorting them at all times, and to the utmost of their power, to avoid and discourage all proceedings, tending to produce Riots and Tumults; and we do strictly charge and command all our Magistrates in and throughout our Kingdom of Great Britain, that they do make diligent enquiry, in order to discover the Authors and Printers of such wicked and seditious writings as aforesaid, and all others who shall disperse the same: And we do further charge and command all our Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, chief Magistrates in our Cities, Boroughs and Corporations, and all other our Officers and Magistrates throughout our Kingdom of Great Britain, that they do, in their several and respective stations, take the most immediate and effectual care to suppress and prevent all Riots, Tumults, and other disorders, which may be attempted to be raised or made by any person or persons, which, on whatever pretext they may be grounded, are not only contrary to law, but dangerous to the most important interests of this Kingdom: And we do further require and command all and every our Magistrates aforesaid, that they do, from time to time, transmit to one of our principal Secretaries of State, due and full information of such persons as shall be found offending as aforesaid, or in any degree aiding or abetting therein; it being our determination, for the preservation of the Peace and Happiness of our faithful and loving Subjects, to carry the Laws vigorously into execution against such offenders as aforesaid.

Given at our Court at the Queen's House, the Twenty-first Day of May, One thousand seven hundred and ninety-two, in the Thirty-second Year of our Reign.

God save the King.

The

BY THE KING,
A PROCLAMATION.

GEORGE R.

WHEREAS by an Act passed in the Twenty-sixth Year of Our Reign, intituled, "An Act for amending and reducing into one Act of Parliament the Laws relating to the Militia in that Part of Great Britain called England," it is enacted that it shall be lawful for Us, in the Cases and in Manner therein mentioned, the occasion being first declared in Council and notified by Proclamation, if no Parliament shall be then sitting, to order and direct the Drawing out and Embodying of Our Militia Forces, or any Part thereof: And whereas, We have received Information, that in Breach of the Laws, and notwithstanding our Royal Proclamation of the Twenty-first Day of May last, the utmost Industry is still employed by evil-disposed persons within this Kingdom, acting in Concert with Persons in Foreign Parts, with a View to subvert the Laws and established Constitution of this Realm, and to destroy all Order and Government therein; and that a spirit of Tumult and Disorder, thereby excited, has lately shewn itself in Acts of Riot and Insurrection. And whereas, under the present Circumstances, it is more particularly necessary, that, for the immediate Suppression of such Attempts, some Addition should be made, as the Exigency of the Case may require, to the Force which may be in Readiness to act for the Support of the Civil Magistrate; We therefore, being determined to exert the Powers vested in Us by Law for the Protection of the Persons, Liberties and Properties of Our faithful Subjects, and fully relying on their Zeal and Attachment

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to our Person and Government, and to the happy Constitution established in these Kingdoms, have thought fit to declare in Our Council Our Royal Intention, for the Causes and on the Occasion aforesaid, to draw out and embody such Part of our Militia Forces as may more immediately enable Us to provide for the said important objects. And We do hereby, in pursuance of the said recited Act, notify to all Our loving Subjects Our said Intention, and the Causes and Occasion thereof.

Given at Our Court at Windsor, the First Day of December, One thousand seven hundred and ninety-two, and in the Thirty-third Year of Our Reign.

God save the King.

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CIRCULAR LETTER,

FROM

LORD GRENVILLE.

My Lord,

Whitehall, Nov. 24, 1792.

THE King having, by his Royal Proclamation, bearing date the 21st day of May last, been pleased to charge and command all his Majesty's Magistrates and Civil Officers throughout his kingdom of Great Britain, to exert themselves for the suppression of divers wicked and seditious writings, published and industriously dispersed with a view to excite discontents, tumults, and disorders in this realm : And his Majesty having been informed that the circulation and dispersion of the said writings, and others of a similar tendency, have nevertheless been renewed with much activity in different parts of the kingdom ;

dom ; has commanded me to communicate to your Lordship his Majesty's directions, that it should be given in charge to the Grand Jury, at the next ensuing general quarter sessions of the peace for the county of —, diligently to enquire, and true presentment to make, of all such wicked and seditious writings so published, and industriously spread as aforesaid, within the said county, as shall be given them in charge, or shall otherwise come to their knowledge, in order that the authors, printers, publishers, and distributors, of all such wicked and seditious writings as aforesaid, may be severally dealt with for their said offences according to law.

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient servant,

(Signed)

GRENVILLE.

The Lord Mayor having had information of tumults and disorders which happened in a *Sixpenny Jacobin Debating Club*, held at the late King's-Arms Tavern, Cornhill, London, on the 19th of November, 1792, to the great annoyance of the neighbourhood, and with a manifest tendency to a breach of the peace; at a meeting to be held there since, ordered the peace-officers to attend, and to inform the people that the said meeting was *postponed*; a number of persons assembled round the house, whose conduct made it necessary for the Lord Mayor to attend in person, with a body of constables, to disperse them; and which was speedily effected.

SANDERSON, Mayor.

—o—
A Common Council holden in the Chamber of the Guildhall of the City of London, on Thursday the 29th Day of November, 1792;

Resolved unanimously,

THAT the Thanks of this Court be given to the Right Honourable Sir JAMES SANDERSON, Lord Mayor of this City, for the wise and timely caution taken by him to prevent any breach of the peace, by the assembling of persons, under the pretence of publicly debating on a political subject, and that this Court will, to the utmost of their power, give every assistance to his Lordship to carry into effect his Majesty's most, gracious Proclamation.

R I X.

SANDERSON, Mayor.

—o—
A Common Council holden in the Chamber of the Guildhall of the City of London, on Thursday the 29th Day of November, 1792;

Resolved unanimously,

THAT it is the duty of all Corporations to preserve their fidelity to their Sovereign, to be watchful for the safety of the sacred Constitution of the country, and to maintain, to the utmost of their power, the peace, the property, and the personal security of every Freeman living under its protection; and it is equally the duty of every Freeman to bear true allegiance to the King, and be obedient to the existing Laws of the Land.

Resolved

Resolved unanimously,

That this Corporation regarding the blessings which the subjects of the British empire enjoy under the present mild and happy Government, as inestimable, will strengthen its exertions, by every possible means, to suppress all unlawful and seditious assemblies within the city, and to bring to justice every disturber of the public tranquillity.

Resolved unanimously,

That this Corporation, in the most solemn manner, doth hereby call upon every good Citizen to co-operate with them to the same salutary end; to discourage every attempt which may be made to excite the fears of the metropolis by wicked and designing men; and each in his own person to be ready at all times to accompany and assist the Magistrates of this city in the suppression of tumult.



The metropolis of Great Britain having so decidedly given its opinion in respect to the conduct of those levelling societies which would pull down the glorious fabrick of the Constitution, no doubt can be entertained that every corporate body, and every town, county, and borough in the Kingdom will follow so laudable an example; and thus, at once, crush those insidious vipers who would poison the minds of the people, level all distinction, and all property, and make one general wreck of the happiness of the empire-

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